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TO DETERMINE THE IMPACT OF OPMS ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF COMMANDER--ETC(U)
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functions in commander development. While generally favorable support of OPMS and its contribution to commander development is evidenced, there are several areas of weakness for which remedial actions are proposed: a possible improvement is the system of developing qualified commanders is "Command Track" management. "Command Tracking" is the recommendation of the author.

US ARMY WAR COLLEGE
INDIVIDUAL RESEARCH BASED ESSAY

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TO DETERMINE THE IMPACT OF OPMS
ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF COMMANDERS

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19 April 1982

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"TO DETERMINE THE IMPACT OF OPMS
ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF
COMMANDERS"

INTRODUCTION

The subject explored in this paper is complex, and it is one that evokes considerable emotionalism. Military command epitomizes the profession of arms and, for some, it represents the capstone of their efforts to make a significant contribution to the institution they serve, and achieve honor and glory. In our Army where ground combat forces are pre-eminent, command of those forces is unquestionably important. Some would even suggest that "so fundamental is this axiom, so universally accepted, so often stressed that no self-respecting soldier can deny it, no officer refute it, or no military historian ignore it. We eulogize superb commanders, score inept ones. We have become so convinced, in fact, of command importance that we take great pains to centrally select only the very best for command assignments at battalion and brigade level."¹ The professionalism and quality of the commander is crucial to the combat power of a military force and the importance can hardly be emphasized enough. The importance of command is such that successful command has become a vital prerequisite for selection to attend a senior service college.

Developing qualified commanders involves a whole plethora of actions or activities of varying precision and sophistication. Exactly what it encompasses - either quantitatively or qualitatively - is a matter of widely differing opinions. However, the focal point of the subject is the OPMS as a management device for "cradle to grave" management and development

for the vast majority of Army officers.

The Army system for managing officer careers, OPMS, evolved as a result of dissatisfaction within the officer corps. This dissatisfaction was highlighted in the 1970 US Army War College Professionalism Study which, among other findings, noted dissatisfaction with assignment and promotion practices utilized by the Army during the Vietnam conflict as well as changing attitudes toward specialization. The major objections were emphasis on generalization, with its inherent rapid job rotation, and a perceived requirement for command in every grade as a prerequisite for promotion. Adherence to these principles had fostered a philosophy of "ticket punching" as the surest route to success and it had begun to undermine professionalism in the Army. Consequently, the Chief of Staff, in October 1970, directed a study to revise the system of officer management. In his memorandum to the DCSPER, outlining guidance he addressed the needs of the Army, but also the individual officer's abilities and desires. The concept of specialists vs commanders and the equality of foreseeable promotion and schooling opportunities were seen as major improvement areas.² As quoted in part from his guidance memorandum the Chief of Staff outlined his guidance on priorities.

The first task is to examine our policies and procedures with respect to command assignments. We must seek to achieve higher quality and greater stability in command.... I want to identify our field grade officers best suited to command, to designate them explicitly as such....³

In response to the Chief of Staff's tasking memorandum, an OPMS plan was completed and forwarded to the field for comment. The forwarding letter identified that the guiding philosophy of OPMS included identifying early and developing centrally officers most qualified for command. Throughout much of the OPMS developmental process this emphasis on commander

development has been an essential ingredient. Prior to this time, the personnel system did not provide for the early formal identification and development of commanders. The only system that came close was when an officer was assigned to a major unit "branch command recommended," but there was still no assurance the officer would assume command. In the proposed system, officers would be tentatively identified for command or staff development in the grade of major and formally designated in conjunction with promotion to lieutenant colonel and colonel. This proposed system has evolved into the present OPMS which includes a centralized command selection system to place the officers best qualified for command in designated command positions.

The purpose of the OPMS as described in DA Pamphlet 600-3 (Officer Professional Development and Utilization) is to enhance the effectiveness and professionalism of the officer corps.⁴to ensure that sufficient numbers of highly qualified officers are always available to assume positions of increasing responsibility and scope throughout the Army. It is suggested that this is accomplished through ensuring the intellectual and professional growth of officers in accordance with Army requirements. Further, officer assignments and training policies are designed to promote the development of leadership, managerial, and technical skills.⁵

In spite of the foregoing, there is continuing concern expressed that perhaps OPMS is not contributing, to the extent it should, to the development of battalion and brigade commanders. Instead, it is suggested that officer specialists are being developed who do not possess the breadth and depth of knowledge and experience desired to execute most effectively the duties and functions of command. Regardless of whether this perception is in accord with the facts, it appears to portray accurately the concerns

and convictions of a significant segment of the officer corps based on my literature search and the results of a survey of the USAWC class of 1982.

DISCUSSION

My literature search revealed a paucity of official studies and documents specifically addressing the impact of OPMS on the development of qualified commanders. However, there were several that addressed the subject at least tangentially and many of the findings and recommendations are relevant. Those findings will be discussed in so far as they complement and supplement the primary source of data for this paper - a survey conducted to facilitate data collection through the compilation of opinions and recommendations of uniquely qualified officers.

RETO STUDY

The 1978 Review of Education and Training for Officers (RETO) devoted considerable attention to commander management. In looking at the officer education and training process and the centralized command selection system as subsystems of OPMS the RETO study highlighted several issues that have an impact on developing commanders. The study reflects the aura attributed to selection for command and subsequent successful performance in command. It likewise posits that successful command is crucial for subsequent selection for senior service college and promotion - a fact representative of officers across the spectrum: combat arms, combat support, and combat service support. The study found that 95% of all colonels of specialties within OPMS responding to the officer survey (conducted as part of the RETO study), indicated they had battalion or brigade command experience. The situation in combat arms was even more striking. More

than 98% had commanded at battalion or brigade level. These data are replicated in the findings of my survey of OPMS managed officers in the USAWC class of 1982 where 100% of the combat arms officers responding had commanded at brigade or battalion level.

Inasmuch as the command selection system performs in accordance with the purpose for which it was instituted - to place the officers best qualified for command in lieutenant colonel and colonel positions - the foregoing information should not be surprising. Nonetheless, the RETO study found a nagging fear and genuine concern within the officer corps and especially its senior leaders, that our current system may be deficient in a number of ways:

- We may be weeding out some late bloomers before they even get a chance to blossom.
- There is a clear need for talented individuals whose skills may not lend themselves to command excellence but whose skills are nonetheless needed in positions of high responsibility. So we may be nonselecting some valuable assets for promotion on the basis that they had never commanded, rather than on the basis of Army needs. We may, in fact, use the wrong reason not to promote the right people!
- We may be prematurely demotivating some extremely competent officers by signalling them through command lists devoid of their names that there is a dead end in their future.⁶

Proposals considered to remedy these assertions spanned the spectrum from shorter command tours, making command a specialty and creating an additional skill indicator (ASI) for commanders.

- The idea of shorter command tours would expand the number of command opportunities and create a large pool of experienced battalion and brigade commanders: such a pool of experienced commanders would facilitate rapid expansion or mobilization. Additionally, shorter tours with its greater number of commanders selected would avoid or reduce the weed-out of the late bloomer. However, the shorter tour proposed was rejected

for several reasons.

- Organizational turbulence caused by relatively frequent changes in direction resulting from differing command philosophies.

- Diminished value of the commander as a role model because he isn't on the scene long enough to have the impact of favorably developing his charges, especially his junior officers.

- The alternate specialty proposal was discarded because of the likely development of a perception of elitism toward commanders; and because duty module analysis demonstrated that commanders must possess strong technical proficiency in their particular specialties and these technical proficiencies were not necessarily transferrable between specialties.

- ASI consideration evolved somewhat differently, and the negative connotations were not found to be prevalent. Rather, the RETO study suggests the ASI could be assigned early in an officer's career and those officer possessing the ASI could be managed, trained, and educated as future commanders. Those officers without it could pursue other skills and not have to compete for the limited number of commands available. The designation of command with an ASI also offers other advantages.

- Adequate time to ensure prospective battalion and brigade commanders are trained in optimum alternate specialties best suited to the Army's needs. Such specialties could include personnel management, tactical intelligence, operations, supply, etc.. Since some specialties obviously have more relevance to command it would seem prudent to optimize the number of prospective commanders with the appropriate alternate specialty.

- The ASI approach has merit in the context of expansion or mobilization because it is a means for providing sufficient numbers of qualified commanders at each level to assume command at the next higher level

with confidence.

The study concluded that the Army's future needs for a well-rounded professional officer corps would be enhanced if commanders were recognized early and schooled, groomed, and nurtured for future higher level commands; and if talented officers who would never command perceived reasonable opportunity to achieve their full potential.

USAWC Study on Military Professionalism

Another study which treats the impact of OPMS, at least peripherally, is the US Army War College Study on Officer Professionalism 1979. The relevant findings and observations are listed below.

- The study revealed that 76% of the officers responding felt that formal military schooling had a positive influence on their professional competence. With respect to competence, this high favorable rating could be viewed as indicative of a high level of satisfaction with the formal Army school system.

- Other issues with significant positive responses included 65% for "increased command tour length good for commanders"; 58% for "increased command tour length being good for the unit" although 33% of the officers responding, were not sure.

- Additional significant findings based on responses to issues:⁷

ISSUE:	% Not Sure	% Pos	% Neg
OPMS is better than OPO (Branch)	54	25	21
Quality of new off is better than pre-VN	51	18	32
OPMS has reduced careerism	44	11	45
Command board selects best commanders	31	34	35

Army Magazine

Lieutenant Colonel James L. Estep, writing in the April 1982 issue of Army magazine, projects some interesting thoughts regarding the centralized command selection system. His article "Paper Commanders - Is Centralized Command Selection The Best Way?" provides some of his perceptions regarding shortcomings of the CCSS based in part on a survey that he conducted. The survey of attitudes about the caliber of lieutenant colonel commanders at a CONUS installation and the CCSS elicited generally favorable responses from brigade commanders. However, LTC. Estep points out that these commanders did observe that they knew of other officers not selected for command who, in their opinion, would have been as good or better commanders than those serving under them.

The nonselected officers felt that their contemporaries who had been selected were performing well. However, his evaluation of the CCSS was not so favorable. With rare exception, he felt that the system selected the generalist - the officer who had "punched his tickets" in all areas - instead of the specialist - the officer who had demonstrated in combat and through extensive troop duty that he is better qualified to command.many a nonselectee felt that extensive troop and combat duty actually penalized him under the selection process....⁸

Perhaps a unique feature of LTC. Estep's survey was soliciting the opinions of senior NCOs. Their opinions appear more critical of the CCSS and showed partiality toward the old system of selecting commanders. Their responses suggested the old system provided more technically competent commanders who were more understanding and concerned about the welfare of their troops. To these senior NCOs, technical competence borne of extensive and recent troop duty is an essential criterion for the best commander and it

contributed to their being attuned to their troops.

To correct the perceived shortcomings, LTC. Estep proposes changes at two levels; internal (actions at DA) and external (actions at field level).

- At DA level he proposes:

- Revising the guidance to selection boards to emphasize (weighting) real-world command qualification criteria as opposed to the "whole-man" concept. ...there is a very real perception in the field that the process is little different from any other board action such as promotion, schools and the like, encompassing basically the same selection criteria.
- Eliminating the promotable major and lieutenant colonel from consideration by their respective command selection boards. Command vacancies are few; for every "promotable" selected, a qualified in-grade officer has lost his opportunity to command, probably forever.
- Discontinuing consideration of OPMS in selecting command designees. OPMS is here to stay; its credibility will not suffer if eliminated from a single process....the primary criterion for selection should be the officer's demonstrated ability to lead troops, not how well he might have performed as a finance or community activities management officer.

- At field level he proposes:

- Forcing the officer within the zone of consideration to declare his intent to command prior to convening the board....the onus of declaration should be on the officer who truly desires to command. DA simply should not waste the time and resources involved in screening, selecting and slating an officer who has no desire or intention of accepting this responsibility.
- Decentralizing the selection process to a limited degree through the incorporation of field input. ...The following two proposals might be incorporated in whole or in part. In like manner, boards could evaluate (or weight) this data to any degree felt appropriate. In both, this information would be for the board's use only....It would not be released to the officer being considered or become part of his OMPF.
 1. Force the senior rater to rank order those in-zone officers under him when the MILPERCEN announces that the selection board is to convene.
 2. Consider the implementation of subordinate ratings.

- Under this proposal a special report might be rendered on the officer concerned by his rates, in conjunction with the announcement of the board.
- Implement a "one-in-three" selection concept.... allow field commanders to select one out of every three commanders now chosen by the CCSS.... Although the proposal is bold.... a "one third" return to a selection process that stood the Army in good stead for 200 years and ten major conflicts would not seem to be either radical or precarious.⁹

LTC. Estep concludes that "field sources" agree that the CCSS is good but it could be better and ought to be improved.

The preceding findings and recommendations are not intended to show, in a definitive way, the broad impact of OPMS on the development of battalion and brigade commanders. Rather, the intent was to reflect some degree of correlation with the kinds of responses received in a survey of the USAWC class of 1982 and certain of the findings and recommendations in the preceding studies.

USAWC Class of 1982 Study On OPMS

The survey of the class of 1982 was used as a device to gather more specific data regarding opinions and perceptions about the impact of OPMS on developing qualified battalion and brigade commanders. In initiating the survey I had reason to believe that perceptions and opinions would differ significantly by branch. However, the results show remarkable similarity across all branches.

Questionnaires were mailed to 161 students (all OPMS managed officers) in the class. Completed questionnaires were returned by 124 students and 47 of those contained written comments in response to open ended questions. The following specific findings relate to the survey analysis. The respondents included 72 combat arms, 26 combat support and 26 combat service support officers. Only 8 officers had not commanded at battalion or brigade

level. Forty three officers described their careers to date as primarily troop duty, 7 as primarily staff duty, 72 as balance between troops and staff and 2 indicating other.

ISSUE: Commanders must be developed through scheduled schooling and assignments.

<u>Category Label</u>	<u>Combat Arms</u>	<u>Combat Support</u>	<u>Combat Svc Spt</u>
Strongly agree/agree	93%	88%	84%
Neutral	6%	8%	8%
Strongly disagree/disagree	1%	4%	8%

COMMENT: Responses here suggest overwhelming acceptance of the importance attributed to schooling and assignments in the command development process, which are OPMS managed or controlled. There is general consistency within each officer category and is not inconsistent with findings of the 1979 US War College Professionalism study.

ISSUE: Schooling and assignments should be centrally managed.

Strongly agree/agree	86%	62%	92%
Neutral	10%	23%	4%
Strongly disagree/disagree	4%	25%	4%

COMMENT: The disparity between combat support officer responses and those of combat arms and combat service support cannot be explained by other survey data or written comment. However, even combat support officers generally agree on the need for centralized management of schooling and assignments.

ISSUE: OPMS is an effective mechanism for officer assignments in a manner conducive to developing qualified commanders.

<u>Category Label</u>	<u>Combat Arms</u>	<u>Combat Support</u>	<u>Combat Svc Spt</u>
Strongly agree/agree	44%	31%	62%
Neutral	29%	35%	23%
Strongly disagree/disagree	27%	34%	15%

COMMENT: These data suggest an area for improvement. Clearly, less than half of the officers responded positively to the OPMS impact in this area. The more positive CSS response might be attributed to the more management characteristics of their command positions than is true of combat and combat support command positions.

ISSUE: OPMS is an effective mechanism for managing officer schooling in a manner conducive to developing qualified commanders.

Strongly agree/agree	59%	62%	58%
Neutral	27%	19%	27%
Strongly disagree/disagree	14%	19%	15%

COMMENT: Generally a favorable disposition toward OPMS management of officer schooling although less favorable than the results of the 1979 Professionalism study. It is also an area for possible improvement.

ISSUE: Emphasis placed on developing additional specialty skills impacts adversely on deliberate development of proficiency in entry specialty skills.

Strongly agree/agree	48%	35%	39%
Neutral	24%	23%	19%
Strongly disagree/disagree	28%	42%	42%

COMMENT: Almost half of the combat arms officers agree with the statement while less than a third disagree. The indication, I believe, is that basic entry specialty proficiency is at least perceived to suffer because of emphasis on additional specialty development. This is not reflected as acutely for combat support and combat service support officers because for

these officers there tends to be closer correlation between entry and additional specialties.

ISSUE: Emphasis placed on developing additional specialty skills impact adversely on deliberate development of proficiency in command skills.

<u>Category Label</u>	<u>Combat Arms</u>	<u>Combat Support</u>	<u>Combat Svc Spt</u>
Strongly agree/agree	45%	27%	42%
Neutral	24%	39%	31%
Strongly disagree/disagree	31%	34%	27%

COMMENT: Here again there is evidence of as area in need of closer attention. While there is not overwhelming agreement with the statement there is, nonetheless, sufficient agreement to suggest improvement is indicated.

ISSUE: The perceived OPMS option of success outside of command works to the detriment of developing qualified commanders.

Strongly agree/agree	25%	27%	23%
Neutral	23%	27%	39%
Strongly disagree/disagree	52%	46%	38%

COMMENT: These findings reflect the generally favorable attitude that there must be the possibility of success outside of command. Indeed it may suggest the awareness of a need for highly talented officers in other than command positions and advancement opportunities compatible with officers pursuing command oriented assignments.

ISSUE: OPMS should provide a command specialty.

Strongly agree/agree	41%	15%	27%
Neutral	41%	12%	12%
Strongly disagree/disagree	48%	73%	61%

COMMENT: The data here suggest lack of support for a command specialty, although there is relatively strong support in combat arms. Based on

narrative comments provided, the sentiment is that a command specialty would polarize the officer corps into commanders and staff, with the inevitable consequence of each group convinced the other does not understand its problems. Further, the opinion is expressed that present command and staff tension is healthy, because we all pass through both functions. A command track would turn temporary tension into standing antagonism, which could fatally flaw the cohesion of the officer corps.

ISSUE: Additional specialty designation by the eighth year of service detracts from officer development of entry specialty expertise.

<u>Category Label</u>	<u>Combat Arms</u>	<u>Combat Support</u>	<u>Combat Svc Spt</u>
Strongly agree/agree	30%	19%	27%
Neutral	31%	23%	19%
Strongly disagree/disagree	39%	58%	54%

COMMENT: A majority of respondents did not agree with the issue, although this is less clearly so of the combat arms officers. Nonetheless, all is not well regarding the timing of additional specialty designation. Approximately a third of the written comments provided suggest additional specialty designation should be delayed 2 to 5 years and or restrictions placed on specialties offered to officers desiring continued command.

ISSUE: Additional specialty designation by the eighth year of service detracts from officer development of critical combined arms skills.

Strongly agree/agree	37%	35%	27%
Neutral	24%	19%	39%
Strongly disagree/disagree	29%	36%	34%

COMMENT: These results are inconclusive, but they do suggest a degree of nonsupport for eighth year additional specialty designation. This is a soft area and a candidate for modification.

ISSUE: Company grade officers and junior majors spend insufficient time in troop duty assignments developing leadership skills needed to effectively command troops.

<u>Category Label</u>	<u>Combat Arms</u>	<u>Combat Support</u>	<u>Combat Svc Spt</u>
Strongly agree/agree	65%	58%	50%
Neutral	20%	19%	23%
Strongly disagree/disagree	15%	23%	27%

COMMENT: Strong support of the issue is reflected in these results. As amplified in written comments, there is the belief that considerable developmental skills and experience are not realized because these officers must spend a disproportionate share of their time in other than troop assignments.

ISSUE: Current centralized selection of battalion commanders insures the best commanders are selected to command.

Strongly agree/agree	69%	46%	62%
Neutral	20%	23%	27%
Strongly disagree/ disagree	11%	31%	11%

COMMENT: These data indicate a strong favorable disposition of the respondents toward the impact of the CCSS in choosing the best commanders to fill battalion command slots. While these results are favorable, there remains areas for improvement as indicated in the written comments.

ISSUE: Current centralized selection of brigade commanders insures that the best commanders are selected to command.

Strongly agree/agree	65%	46%	65%
Neutral	20%	27%	23%
Strongly disagree/ disagree	15%	27%	12%

COMMENT: Same as for battalion commanders.

ISSUE: Extended command tours contribute to developing qualified commanders.

<u>Category Label</u>	<u>Combat Arms</u>	<u>Combat Support</u>	<u>Combat Svc Spt</u>
Strongly agree/agree	38%	46%	27%
Neutral	18%	23%	19%
Strongly disagree/disagree	44%	31%	54%

COMMENT: These data suggest that a large percentage of the respondents do not see extended command tours contributing to developing qualified commanders. While battalion commanders are on station longer their subordinate officers are not similarly stabilized to benefit fully from the battalion commander as a role model.

ISSUE: OPMS should provide for an additional skill identifier (ASI) to identify commanders at the company grade level in sufficient time to prepare them for later lieutenant colonel and colonel command.

Strongly agree/agree	31%	15%	31%
Neutral	20%	23%	15%
Strongly disagree/disagree	49%	62%	54%

COMMENT: These data are similar to data for the command as an alternate specialty issue. However, when interviewed in small groups with a definitive explanation of how an ASI might be used the response was generally favorable.

ISSUE: OPMS has impacted favorably on my development as a commander.

Strongly agree/agree	27%	31%	19%
Neutral	44%	31%	50%
Strongly disagree/disagree	39%	38%	31%

COMMENT: The high degree ambivalence is due to the relatively advanced stage of career development the respondents were in when OPMS was implemented. However, it is noteworthy that a significant number felt that OPMS

has had a positive impact.

ISSUE: Factors other than OPMS have had a more favorable impact on my development as a commander.

<u>Category Label</u>	<u>Combat Arms</u>	<u>Combat Support</u>	<u>Combat Svc Spt</u>
Strongly agree/agree	66%	65%	67%
Neutral	20%	23%	20%
Strongly disagree/disagree	14%	12%	13%

COMMENT: The flip side of the previous issue.

ISSUE: Which of the following factors has the most positive impact on the development of qualified commanders?

ROTC/USMA/OCS	6%	4%	0%
Civil education/experience	0%	4%	4%
OPMS (Mil/Civ sch and asgmt)	46%	42%	46%
Own Study	13%	4%	15%
Ldrship example of others	35%	46%	35%

COMMENT: These data clearly indicate the two areas, OPMS and leadership examples of others, as exerting by far the greatest positive influence on the development of qualified commanders. It is of more than passing interest to note how these data are consistent with findings in the 1970 and 1979 War College Professionalism studies, the RETO study, LTC. Estep's survey and other writings.

As stated previously, the questionnaire used also provided for written comments. The following are representative remarks extracted from the narrative comments of questionnaires. Remarks are grouped by branch (combat arms, combat support, and combat service support) and categorized according to strength or weakness of OPMS in developing qualified commanders.

Combat Arms: Specific strengths.

- OPMS provides for a successful career outside of command, thus reducing the number of officers competing for limited number of commands available.
- Provision for a centralized command selection system and a pre-command course.
- OPMS eliminated "ole boy" battalion and brigade commanders.
- It requires certain steps to be accomplished in development of an officer's career: nominative assignments only after company level command (for combat arms officers), troop duty as a field grade, etc..
- Provides a blueprint for officer development: the young officer knows that he will pick up a second specialty at his eighth year, and that subsequent assignments will focus on his entry and other specialty. He can orient on the other specialty that he feels would most contribute to his success/potential as a commander.
- Provides equal opportunity for all concerned regardless of individual assignment during the selection period.
- Assignments and schooling options.
- Helps to broaden the officers outlook, experience and expertise. An officer who has only troop time will not necessarily be the best qualified commander.

Specific weaknesses.

- OPMS does not control the ultimate assignment of an officer once he reaches an installation - except for O5/O6 commanders and certain controlled specialties. While this gives the local chain of command flexibility, it may work counter to OPMS requirements.
- Extended command tours is an over-reaction to earlier justified criticism of 6 month tours, ticket punching, dilettante commanders, personnel turbulence, etc.. Also extended tours ultimately rob the Army of a large reservoir of experienced commanders to serve in key positions and for mobilization.
- The command selection process is unwieldly and painfully slow.
- Too much emphasis on developing an additional specialty.
- You have to maintain "outstanding" performance in every job. An officer may be the best commander of troops we have, but if he does not get outstanding ratings in every

assignment, regardless of type or importance he will never see command again.

- The apparent inflexibility in the past - eighth year period where there is pressure to "qualify" an officer in his other specialty results in him being reassigned from key jobs: the officer has a chance to be a battalion XO (after three years in a division) but MILPERCEN moves him because of a perceived need to "qualify" him and because its time to move.
- Lack of input from commanders in the field (div/corps/bde).
- Getting locked into additional specialty at critical time can be detrimental. For example, several of my contemporaries and myself never served in a troop unit or staff with troops as a major due to "needs of the service" in our additional specialty (49).
- Does not allow enough troop opportunities for majors; and when it does their OPMS alternate specialty may suffer.
- Extremely difficult to get the right mix of assignments to insure adequate development of future commanders; nevertheless, I still believe OPMS is an improvement over the old system.

Combat Support: Specific strengths.

- OPMS provides an increased opportunity for potential commanders to develop knowledge in other functional areas.
- Schooling and assignment opportunities.
- Keeps the "good old boy" net from operating.
- Pre-command courses and our schooling system offer the best classroom preparation.
- Provides proper balance of assignments at all grade levels, however, this doesn't happen all the time.
- Officers interested in preparing themselves for battalion command know what schools and jobs they must succeed at in order to be competitive for selection.
- Officers have the option early in and throughout their career of indicating their non-desire for command by not selecting company command and troop duty assignments.

Specific weaknesses.

- Assignment to a command position by MILPERCEN does not mean the officer will command, especially in USAREUR. MILPERCEN can only assign to a location or command.
- The system is very unforgiving. A mistake as a lieutenant, all other things being equal, can preclude an officer's selection for command.
- Does not emphasize command. Encourages junior officers to avoid troops with visions of success in alternate specialties. Paints a false picture to ROTC/USMA grads of upward mobility doing what they perceive to be "fun" rather than learning the nuts and bolts of leadership of troops.

Combat Service Support: Specific strengths.

- It gives commanders something to do when they're not commanding. The promotion system "guarantees" promotion of successful commanders to O6 level (perhaps at the expense of successful staff officers).
- Centralized command selection for O5 and O6 command is an excellent mechanism to place the best qualified officers in command and eliminate the "good ole boy", "brother-in-law" selection criteria of the past.
- Broadens the individual in staff areas critical to success as a commander. A commander cannot be "ignorant" of staff areas and therefore be forced to rely on "staff experts."
- Exposes individual to varied methods of accomplishing the mission, leadership and management. This exposure would be less likely if an individual were confined solely to a troop oriented, command "track."
- Allows for promotion without command so that only those who really desire command will accept.
- Provides for development of specific skills and knowledge required for success in command slots associated with the officer's specialty.
- A fair system for promotion, school selection, and command.

Specific weaknesses.

- Difficult to be proficient in two specialties when you subtract military schooling, civilian schooling, "branch immaterial" assignments e.g. IG.

- Failure to properly identify potential commanders early and make assignments accordingly.
- Narrows scope of officer's knowledge by focusing on two areas; general knowledge developed through branch immaterial assignments are as important to professional development as that gained through specialty concentration.
- Some OPMS specialties have little or no direct relationship to command - particularly combat arms command. Time spent in these specialties (ADP, procurement, FAO, PAO, etc.) may well detract from command qualification.
- OPMS should not have been implemented. I do not see it developing commanders. Instead, it is used to provide jobs for combat arms officers in peacetime. OPMS could ruin careers of our officers O4 and below.
- Recent decisions to lengthen command tours markedly reduces the pool of command experienced officers so vitally needed as we prepare for war. There is no substitute for experience when striving for excellence.
- Assignment system is not controlled at DA level. Local commander determines assignments of other than O5/O6 commanders, and many are more concerned with the needs of their commands than the career development needs of individual officers.

Small Group Discussions/Interviews

Although the discussions/interviews were not exhaustive and were insufficient to reach definitive conclusions, they did suggest a course of action to possible improvement in our present system of developing and managing qualified commanders.

During these discussions/interviews attention was focused on a proposed new approach to commander development - "Command Tracking." This approach was developed in response to concerns reflected in the survey results regarding the following areas.

- The insufficiency of OPMS control of assignments.
- Assignment policies and priorities resulting in company grade

officers and junior majors spending insufficient time developing command skills and experience.

- Lack of a formal process or procedure for early identification, designation, and development of qualified commanders.

- Concerns about additional specialty designation procedures.

To ameliorate these and other perceived shortcomings "Command Tracking" was developed using the 1978 RETO study recommendation for a command ASI as a point of departure. Specifically "Command Tracking" provides for the following:

- Continued emphasis on the assignment of officers to troop duty during their initial tour of duty. Maximum effort must be made by MILPERCEN and all other activities and commanders to assure the young lieutenant's exposure to troop leadership positions during this critical formative period.

- Subsequent to successful company level command officers will be identified (through award of an ASI or other device) based on a recommendation by the officer's battalion commander and indorsement by the brigade commander. The recommendation would have to be concurred with by the officer recommended and he would be permitted to decline without prejudice.

- Officers not designated upon completion of company level command would continue to be eligible upon recommendation and indorsement by appropriate commanders. Conversely, those officers previously designated would be subject to termination of their status for cause or they could elect to terminate voluntarily without prejudice.

- Officers identified for continued command development through "Command Tracking" would be afforded maximum opportunity for additional company level command and or staff duty with troops at battalion, brigade or

division level. Basic entry specialty development cannot continue to be conducted identically for all officers. Rather, command oriented officers must be allowed to pursue one path while those officers who are not command inclined or talented pursue another path.

- Command designated officers would also generally be expected to receive an additional specialty in which expertise could be developed by job assignment at division or lower level (SC 41, 35, 94, 54, etc.) and which would have the greatest relevance to command.

- The current centralized command selection system for battalion commanders would continue. However, only those lieutenant colonels and majors (P) who were previously identified for command development and who expressed in writing an intent to accept command if selected would be considered by the CCSS board. Those officers not selected for battalion command after a reasonable number of times considered (3 or 4) would be expected to concentrate their efforts and expertise in other areas.

- Upon successful completion of battalion command officers would be selected to retain the "Command Tracking" designation by a MILPERCEN screening board. Selection at this time would not guarantee eventual brigade command selection. Rather, it would identify those former battalion commanders with the greatest potential for brigade command and provide enhanced opportunity for them to increase their command skills through assignments and study. Those former battalion commanders not selected to retain the "Command Tracking" designation could then concentrate in other areas of expertise and importance to the Army.

- Upon selection for promotion to colonel only those officers selected for continued "Command Tracking" would compete for available commands.

- Officers selected would be permitted to indicate their pre-

ference (submitted upon announcement of the convening of a board) for command based on specific commands available. Three choices of location or unit would be permitted.

— During the slating process MACOM commanders would be permitted to select one-third to one-half of their commanders from those colonels selected for command and indicating a preference for their MACOM.

— The remaining command vacancies would be filled in accordance with current slating procedures.

— Colonels not selected after 3 or 4 times being considered for command would devote their expertise to other vital areas.

The response to "Command Tracking" was favorable regarding improved impact on developing qualified commanders. However, there was concern expressed that its overall healthy impact on the entire officer corps is dependent on the perceived fairness to those officers who either opt out or who are opted out of "Command Tracking." This is accepted as a legitimate concern which can only be abated through continued promotion and school selection board results that reflect equality of opportunity for advancement. In the final analysis, the success of OPMS may not so much depend on how it impacts on the development of qualified commanders, but rather, on how it permits those best qualified for command to pursue that career while making a noncommand career equally attractive for others.

"Command Tracking" is not a panacea or prescription for guaranteed successful command, nor is it intended to be - only performance on the job will do that. However, it does provide, in a systematic and deliberate fashion, the kinds of opportunities for growth and maturity in command skill enhancing environments essential to developing qualified commanders. It offers the prospect of reversing the trend of our junior officers spend-

ing too little time in troop units understudying proven leadership. Further, it would reflect that professional competence in commander skills is a product of the formative years, and a process that must be augmented on a continuing basis.

CONCLUSION

The foregoing discussion points up the widely differing opinions held regarding the impact of OPMS on developing qualified commanders. But, it is still clear that there is general agreement that OPMS represents an improvement over the system it replaced. The favorable impact of the formal schooling system, reduction in the effectiveness of the "good ole boy" net, extended command tours, centralized command selection system, and the opportunity for success outside of command are preceived to impact favorably on developing qualified commanders. However, on the negative side of the ledger, there is concern that there ought to be greater OPMS impact by way of more concentrated and systematic development of command skills. Such development based in part on the following:

- Early identification and training of future battalion and brigade commanders.
- Modification of additional specialty designation procedures.
- Greater assignment stabilization for junior officers in order to realize the full benefit from the battalion commander as a role model.

The 1978 Review of Education and Training for Officers study, in its analysis of commander management, concluded that "the Army's future needs for a well-rounded professional officer corps will be enhanced if commanders are recognized early and schooled, groomed, and nurtured for future higher level commands; and if talented officers who will never command

perceive reasonable opportunity to achieve their full potential."¹⁰ Regrettably, four years later the same observation can be made. Command is too important for this situation to be allowed to continue. While the officer and his commander must continue to share a large part of the responsibility for commander development, OPMS must provide the centralizing guidance and management to insure that only the best qualified commanders are identified, groomed, and nurtured for command. "Command Tracking" offers a systematic approach to blending the efforts of all in achieving the common goal of developing the best qualified commanders for future higher level command.

ENDNOTES

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2. Army Chief of Staff Memorandum to LTG W. T. Kerwin, Jr, DCSPER, Subject: Guidance for Improving Army Professionalism, 16 October 1970, p. 2.
3. Ibid., p. 4.
4. Headquarters, Department of the Army, Pamphlet 600-3, Officer Professional Development and Utilization, September 1977 w/change 3 November 1981, p. 1-1.
5. Ibid., p. 2-5.
6. Headquarters, Department of the Army, A Review of Education and Training for Officers, volume 4, p. R-2-2, 30 June 1978.
7. US Army War College, Study on Military Professionalism (Executive Summary), pp. 9-10, 1979.
8. LTC. James L. Estep, 'Paper Commanders' Is Centralized Command Selection the Best Way?, Army Magazine, April 1982, p. 19.
9. Ibid., pp. 20-21.
10. Headquarters, Department of the Army, A Review of Education and Training for Officers, volume 4, p. R-2-11, 30 June 1978.

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10. US Army War College, Study on Military Professionalism. Carlisle Bks, Pa., 30 June 1970.